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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN MFA OFFICIAL: TFG PRESIDENT SHARIF IN A  
BIND

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C/NF) Summary. Ethiopian MFA Official, and former special envoy to Somalia, Abdetta Dribssa told PolOff on March 12 that, in his view, Unity Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Sheikh Sharif would have no choice but to ask the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeepers to leave Somalia within the next few months if Sharif wanted to keep the backing of the newly established council of Somali clerics and remain president. Abdetta said Sharif could not survive without "Ethiopian guns" or "someone's else's guns," particularly if AMISOM withdrew, because Sharif did not yet have sufficient forces directly loyal to him to maintain his position. Abdetta also said that former Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS)/Djibouti Hawiye/Habir Gedir militia commanders in Mogadishu were refusing to integrate their forces with TFG forces, where they would be more directly under Sharif's authority than each of their respective commander's, leaving Sharif in a difficult position because Sharif's own Hawiye/Abgal clansmen were not yet unified behind him. Finally, Abdetta believed that increased U.S. diplomatic and financial support to Sharif and the TFG was essential if the TFG was to survive. (Note: Although Abdetta ceased to serve as Ethiopia's official envoy to Somalia once the Ethiopian troops withdrew earlier this year, he continues to have responsibility for the Somalia portfolio within the MFA. End Note.) End Summary.

"Sharif Will Ask AMISOM to Leave Somalia"

12. (C/NF) Abdetta predicted that within two or three months Sheikh Sharif would have no choice but to ask AMISOM to leave Somalia. Abdetta said the early March edict by the Somali council of clerics that called for AMISOM to leave Somalia within 120 days from March 1 had "trapped" Sharif, and that to continue to maintain support for his presidency from within Somalia, Sharif would have to comply with the council's wishes. Otherwise, he said, Sharif would be declared an illegitimate leader. Abdetta added that support for the departure of AMISOM was widespread from within Sharif's ARS/Djibouti allies.

13. (C/NF) Abdetta said Sharif agreed to the establishment of Sharia law, another of the cleric's demands, because he had no choice. He said although Sharif himself hoped to use the announcement as a tactic to disarm extremist opposition to the TFG, he questioned how long it would be before Sharif would be forced to implement a more hard-line type of Sharia, one that would certainly not be viewed as moderate by the

international community.

#### Joint Security Forces a Fiction?

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¶4. (C/NF) Abdetta asserted that Sheikh Sharif could not survive without "Ethiopia's guns" or "someone else's guns," particularly if AMISOM withdrew. He said Sharif had few forces that were directly loyal to him, and noted that when the Ethiopian military left Mogadishu, the ARS/Djibouti could not muster "200 troops" to backfill the Ethiopians in the city. When PolOff pressed Abdetta on the 2,700 man Joint Security Force (JSF) which was reported to include 1,350 troops from the TFG and 1,350 troops from the ARS/Djibouti, Abdetta responded that "those numbers are nice round figures for the international community to believe in." He asked rhetorically, "has the international community counted those forces for themselves?" and "who is in Mogadishu to verify such claims?"

#### Sharif's Militia Commanders Refusing Integration

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¶5. (C/NF) Abdetta went on to explain that ARS/Djibouti Habir Gedir militia leaders in Mogadishu were refusing to integrate their forces with those of the TFG. He said in recent weeks Sharif had instructed ARS/Djibouti militia leaders, including his own Minister of the Interior Sheikh Abdiqadir Ali Omar, who controls one of the largest ARS militias in Mogadishu, to prepare their forces for integration with TFG forces. Abdiqadir responded that his forces were "clean" (meaning that they were proper Muslims)

and that he would never "dirty" them by mixing them with the others. At the same time, Abdetta said, the commanders did not want to give up direct control of their militias. Nevertheless, Abdiqadir and others were taking money from Sharif to help pay their fighters, but Abdetta added that little of the money was going to pay the troops, and most of it stayed in the leader's pockets.

¶6. (C/NF) Sharif's real problem, according to Abdetta, was that his own Hawiye/Abgal clan was not unified in any respect, and certainly not yet unified in support of Sharif. He stated that Sharif's position would improve somewhat if he is able to solidify Abgal support. Abdetta questioned whether the various components of the Hawiye/Habir Gedir would ever truly trust Sharif, or fully support him.

"Sharif is an Opportunist"

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¶7. (C/NF) On the question as to whether Sharif was an opportunist or a pragmatist, Abdetta insisted Sharif was an opportunist seeking power. He said Sharif would align himself with whoever stood the most chance of advancing Sharif's position, noting that this trait was not unique among Somalis. He observed that Sharif was adept at playing the "good listener," and always stayed on message in meetings with other Somalis or with the international community.

#### US Support to Sharif Needed

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¶8. (C/NF) Although Abdetta assessed that political conditions in Mogadishu were deteriorating with less room for Sharif to maneuver outside of the more stringent Islamists' demands on him, Abdetta stressed that increased diplomatic and financial support to the TFG from the United States was absolutely essential if the Unity TFG was to have any chance of surviving. He then asked where the USD 5 million was that had been promised by the United States for the JSF. He said to begin to establish truly integrated security forces, the United States would need to provide funding dispersed as part of some mechanism through AMISOM, and soon.

Comment

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19. (C/NF) The notion that Sharif's hands have been tied by the more hard-line elements within his own ARS/Djibouti allies, and from the broader Somali religious community, is becoming a more frequent refrain from Somali watchers and Somalis themselves around Addis Ababa, and we share the concern. One of Sharif's closest advisors, General Mohamed Shiekh Hassan, privately told PolOff on March 7 essentially the same message noting that Sharif was in a "tug of war" with the "hard-liners," and he was uncertain who would win (SEPTTEL). End Comment.  
YAMAMOTO